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Ecuador

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Ecuador

History

Before the Spaniards arrived in the 16th century, the "Republic of the Equator" was part of the Inca empire. The country remained under Spanish control until Antonio José de Sucre liberated the region in 1822, at which time it became part of Greater Colombia. When this union collapsed in 1830, three countries were formed: Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador. During the period of 1904–1942, several conflicts with neighboring countries caused Ecuador to lose some of its territory. Since then, several uprisings and clashes with Peru have contributed to Ecuador's volatile history.

Landmines/UXO Overview

Due to the territorial disputes between Ecuador and Peru, thousands of landmines, both anti-personnel and anti-vehicle, have been laid in Ecuador. According to the Organization of American States (OAS), Ecuador admitted to laying landmines along the border between 1995 and 1998, implicating the country of utilizing anti-personnel mines after signing the Mine Ban Treaty in 1997, but before its entry into force in 1999. The two countries resolved their territorial disputes in 1998. Since that time, both countries have been working to destroy remaining landmine stockpiles and removing existing landmines.

Casualties

Landmine casualty data from Ecuador is not entirely accurate; however, according to the U.S. State Department, there were approximately 120 landmine casualties reported in Ecuador between 1995 and 1999. The majority of casualties was comprised of civilians. In 2001, seven landmine casualties and seven landmine accidents were reported. There have been no deminers killed by landmines since humanitarian demining began in Ecuador.

Demining

The Ecuadorian army has been responsible for conducting mine clearance in Ecuador. In 2001, both Ecuador and Peru became members of the OAS Mine Action Program and have begun collaborating the efforts needed to clear landmines in both countries. Between 2002 and 2003, the countries held several meetings to delegate demining responsibilities. The United States Army conducted basic courses on demining, the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA), and humanitarian demining for both countries in 2002. In 2003, the Inter-American Defense Board (IADB) began creating an international monitoring team for demining operations along the landmine-infested area residing between Ecuador and Peru. Also 2003, the OAS Comprehensive Action Against Anti-personnel Mines (AICMA) and the IADB trained Ecuadorian deminers on International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) and quality control.

The OAS reported in March of 2003 that a total of 61,649 square meters of land had been cleared and determined habitable. Over 4,000 anti-personnel landmines were discovered and destroyed. Ecuador has stated that it has not manufactured anti-personnel mines and that there are no landmine production facilities. During the country's territorial conflicts with Peru, however, Ecuador has admitted to importing landmines from numerous countries. Currently, the country reports that there is no mine use among its military.

By January 2002, Ecuador had reported that it had completed destruction of its mine stockpile of 260,302 anti-personnel landmines. Estimates of destroyed landmines contradict later reports, however, leaving nearly 1,500 landmines unaccounted for. Some of these "missing" mines may be included in the landmines retained for training purposes. In April 2003, Ecuador reported retaining nearly



4,000 mines for training purposes, which contradicts numbers reported in the year prior.

Reality Check

Since 1999, the United States has contributed nearly \$10,000,000 (U.S.) to Peru and Ecuador in their mine action efforts. The United States has also assisted these efforts by establishing regional mine action centers and by training more than 750 Peruvian and Ecuadorian army personnel in basic demining techniques. Additionally, the Mine Action Program the OAS established in Ecuador and Peru has aided in the development and support of mine risk education, victim assistance, data collection and humanitarian demining. Mine risk education has also been successful and developed in the country by the United States Army and the Ecuadorian Red Cross.

Contact Information

Guillermo E. Leal
Coordinador Nacional AICMA-EC
OEA - UPD
Tel: +593 2 2522259/2558292
Fax: +593 2 2239820
Mobile: 593 9 9443487
E-mail: gleal@aicma-ec.org
Website: www.aicma-ec.org

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